

people of color, young people, urban people, and people who vote Democratic. It has nothing to do with fraud. They haven't pointed out that there is more fraud in those areas than in other areas. It is just blatant, blatant partisan advantage.

Whatever voting changes Republicans think are good for them, they will make them, even if it means resorting to the awful and un-American act of voter suppression. So in State after State—State after State—Republicans are reducing polling hours and locations and the number of drop boxes so that Americans of all parties, but particularly aimed at Democratic voters, people of color, young people, poor people, have a harder time finding the time, place, and manner to vote.

They are limiting the kind of IDs you can use, like student IDs, while at the same time removing requirements of any form of licensing to own a firearm. Has any study shown that there is less fraud among firearm owners than students? There is probably very little among either, but they pick one group and not the other, and we know why.

Republican legislatures are making it easier to own a gun than to vote. Republican legislatures are making it harder to vote early, harder to vote by mail, and harder to vote after work. They are making it a crime to give food or water to voters waiting in long lines. They are trying to make it harder for Black churchgoers to vote on Sunday. And they are actually making it easier for unelected judges and partisan election boards to overturn the results of an election, opening the door for some demagogue, a Trumpian-type demagogue—maybe he himself—to try and subvert our elections in the very same way that Trump tried to do it in 2020.

Republicans say these laws are about “election integrity.” They claim they are only trying to “secure the vote.” Some of my friends here in Washington have resorted to the old refrain that election laws are best left to the States, ignoring the fact that for generations, we, in Congress, have passed Federal election laws and constitutional amendments to prevent exactly this kind of discrimination and voter suppression.

We all know what these laws are about. I daresay my Republican colleagues know. They are not stupid. When the State of Texas proposes to limit voting hours on Sunday to only a few hours in the evening, do they really believe that is about preventing fraud? Do my Senate friends want to back up that kind of thing, prevent it from even being talked about here on the floor of the Senate? When Georgia Republicans say it is a crime to give a voter some water or food as they wait in line on a hot day, do they really think they are preventing voter fraud by denying them a snack? Give me a break. Give me a break.

Republicans across the country are deliberately targeting all the ways

that younger, poorer, non-White, and typically Democratic voters access the ballot. Republicans claim they are making it easier to vote and harder to cheat in an election. In reality, they are making it harder to vote and easier to cheat in an election, and we all know it.

And all we want to do here is debate it in regular order—regular order—which colleagues on both sides of the aisle have asked for. That is what we are asking for here, just to debate these things, and they won't even do that because they are so afraid of what that debate will show: that this is not election integrity; that this is voter suppression and voter suppression directed at only one group of voters.

Well, we are going to see what happens today. Later today, the entire country will see whether our Republican friends are willing to even debate this issue in broad daylight. This afternoon, the U.S. Senate will vote on a motion to proceed to voting rights legislation. We all know what a motion to proceed is around here, but let me explain it. All it says is let's go forward with debate. Let's debate something, and this is among the most important things we could ever debate, the right to vote—what our soldiers have died for and what peaceful marchers have been bloodied for, the right to vote.

It takes 60 votes to start that debate. Everyone knows you still need 60 votes to end the debate on a bill. So even if the Republicans don't like the legislation at the end of the process, let them vote against it then. But, no, they don't even want to debate it. They don't even want to debate it because they are afraid. They want to deny the right to vote, make it harder to vote for so many Americans, and then they don't want to talk about it, sweep it under the rug, and hope that Americans don't hear about it.

But Americans will hear about it. We are going to make sure of that, and millions in the country who are rightly and correctly outraged by what is happening will let everyone know what has happened.

Now, only by starting the process can Senators offer amendments, change the bill, forge compromise. Only then can Senators engage in a full-throated debate about what this Chamber should do about the assault on voting rights in this country. Obviously, there are arguments about what should be done to protect voting rights and safeguard our democracy. Obviously, there are arguments about which policies are the most effective. But shouldn't we at least agree to debate the issue?

That is the only question for the U.S. Senate today. Do my Republican colleagues believe that voting rights, the most fundamental in a democracy, the right that generations of Americans have marched for and protested to achieve, that generations of American soldiers have fought and died to secure, is that worthy of debate? Of course it is.

Should the U.S. Senate even debate how to protect the voting rights of our citizens? There is only one correct answer. We will see if our Republican colleagues choose it this afternoon.

This is not simply a partisan issue, as partisan as the Republican side and the State legislatures and now here in the Senate seem to make it. It is about the fundamental values in this country. It is about what we are all about.

When the Constitution was started in most States, you had to be a White male Protestant property owner to vote. There has been an inexorable march to expand that right to vote and allow more and more Americans to have that right to vote. This is a giant step backward. Obviously, it is a partisan issue to the Republicans, but it is a much deeper issue than that.

Will our colleagues stand up for what generations of Americans have fought for, marched for, and died for or will they just slink away and say we are not even going to debate this?

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

IRAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, over the weekend, Iran held what its Supreme Leader might call a Presidential election. To the rest of the world, including millions of Iranians, what actually happened was quite clear. The regime's favored choice was selected from a limited field of approved candidates in a carefully controlled bit of political theater. There is no doubt this charade works as intended. The Ayatollah got a President-elect with a record of strict adherence to his regime's revolutionary orthodoxy. Meanwhile, former Presidential candidates who emerged as leaders in the popular 2009 Green Movement remain under house arrest. Like his predecessors, Ebrahim Raisi will serve as a figurehead while the Supreme Leader and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard actually run the show.

But even rigged elections have consequences, and the new most visible figure in Tehran has a proven history as a headline theocrat. For decades, from his time on a so-called death committee in the 1980s, the President-elect played an intimate role in the trial, conviction, and summary execution of political prisoners and peaceful protesters. There is no question he is an extreme hardliner, even in the Iranian context, and now he is set to be the so-called counterpart to President Biden as this administration reengages eagerly with the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism.

In some circles, a looming turnover in the top ranks of Iranian leadership is being spun as a reason for the White House to rush even faster than it already is toward restoring the Obama administration's failed nuclear deal. One particularly eager assessment in the New York Times called the next 6

weeks “a unique window for clinching an agreement,” like some sort of liquidation sale in which President Biden needs to take whatever he can. Meanwhile, rational observers know that the fundamental reality of the U.S.-Iranian relations certainly has not changed.

If the selection of a new hardline figurehead in Tehran sends any signal, it is a reminder that showering the regime with sanctions relief and expecting a change in behavior is a reckless and damaging approach. In fact, President-elect Raisi has already said as much himself. Iran's ballistic missile program is “not negotiable,” and meeting with President Biden is not on the table.

Of course, Iranian politicians and diplomats are known to lie and to dissemble, so we should pay closest attention to this regime's actions. What will it actually do?

Here is the truth: Domestic political developments in Tehran don't absolve the Biden administration of its responsibility to confront Iran's nuclear and missile proliferation, its support for terrorism, its abuses of human rights, and its relentless efforts to destabilize the entire region.

If President Biden hopes to earn bipartisan support for an Iran policy that could outlast his time in office, he needs to start explaining how he intends to respond as Iran ramps up threats against the United States and our closest partners in its backyard.

Remember, the thousands of rockets Hamas fired at Israel last month were made possible by Iran. So were the precision-guided munitions in Hezbollah's arsenal and the ballistic missiles and UAVs launched into Saudi Arabia by the Houthis in Yemen. And the dozens of militia attacks on U.S. interests in Iraq? Carried out by Tehran's reliable accolades.

The Biden administration has had months to develop a coherent rationale for its eager engagement with the Iranian regime and months to hash out a better plan than rewarding terrorist sponsors with sanctions relief. An explanation to Congress is long overdue.

FOR THE PEOPLE ACT OF 2021

Mr. President, now on an entirely different matter, later today, the Senate will vote on whether to advance Democrats' transparently partisan plan to tilt every election in America permanently in their favor.

By now, the rotten inner workings of this power grab have been thoroughly exposed to the light. We know that it would shatter a decades-old understanding that campaign law should have a bipartisan referee and turn the Federal Election Commission into a partisan majority cudgel for Democrats to wield against their political opponents. We know that it would let Washington bureaucrats direct Federal dollars into politicians' campaign accounts—government money for yard signs and attack ads. We know that it would let Democrats take a red pen to election laws in each of the 50 States,

neutering popular precautions like voter ID while legalizing shady practices like ballot harvesting across the board.

It is a recipe for undermining confidence in our elections, for remaking our entire system of government to suit the preferences of one far end of the political spectrum. And if they could, many Democrats would pass it with the slimmest possible majority, even after its companion faced bipartisan opposition over in the House. What a craven political calculation. What a way to show your disdain for the American people's choices.

Of course, it isn't even limited to election law. Among the most dangerous parts of S. 1 is the way it would equip partisan regulators to intimidate and to discourage private citizens from engaging in political speech.

Unfortunately, this one is a familiar concept for too many Americans. It is not hard to imagine Federal bureaucrats indulging ideological grudges and chilling free speech. It has actually happened before. The Nation was reminded just a few weeks ago how unable the Federal Government can be to protect private citizens' personal information—unable or just unwilling?

But conservatives in particular didn't need a reminder of what became institutionalized discrimination under the last Democratic administration. So when private contributors, nonprofit advocacy groups, and religious organizations see that S. 1's disclosure requirements would intentionally unlearn the lessons of the IRS's abuses under Lois Lerner, they have plenty of reasons—plenty—to fear.

Naming and shaming is not a hypothetical concept; it has been a concrete reality for thousands of private citizens. Today, Democrats are asking for a green light to supercharge the intimidation machine that makes all that possible.

We have heard this entire package described in many ways over the years. It has been around for a while. The same rotten proposals have sometimes been called a massive overhaul for a broken democracy, sometimes just a modest package of tweaks for a democracy that is working perfectly, and sometimes a response to State actions, which this bill actually predates by many years. But whichever label Democrats slap on the bill, the substance remains the same. It has always been a plan to rewrite the ground rules of American politics.

By the way, no matter what far-left activists are telling our colleagues, this most sensitive subject would not be the best place to trash the Senate's rules to ram something through. In fact, these issues would be the worst possible place to push through a power grab at any cost.

The Senate is no obstacle to voting laws done the right way. I have helped write legislation regarding our democracy that has soared through this Chamber on huge bipartisan margins.

The Senate is only an obstacle when the policy is flawed and the process is rotten, and that is exactly why this body exists.

Today, the Senate is going to fulfill our founding purpose, stop the partisan power grab, and reject S. 1.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, what is the status of the floor?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate is considering the Fonzzone nomination.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, let's be clear. We are facing the most dangerous and overt threat to our democratic system in generations.

Supreme Court decisions like *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon* wrongly equated money with speech, and in the decades since, unaccountable dark money has flooded into our political system. This broken campaign finance system allows billionaires to drown out the voices of ordinary Americans with no accountability. This lack of transparency also opens the door for dangerous disinformation campaigns.

After the Supreme Court gutted article V of the Voting Rights Act in another terrible decision, we have also seen State legislatures across the country take up and pass voting laws designed explicitly to prevent Black, Brown, and young voters from exercising their right to vote.

These new laws in States like Georgia, Arizona, and Texas are right out of the pre-Voting Rights Act playbook of the Jim Crow South. Some have called them Jim Crow 2.0, and, frankly, it is hard to disagree. They make it harder to register to vote. They reduce early voting times in polling locations. They restrict access to vote by mail. In the Presiding Officer's State in Georgia, it is now illegal to hand out water to someone who has been standing in line for hours to vote, waiting to vote. Could anything be more wrongheaded?

My home State of New Mexico is a good example of what it looks like to enhance rather than attack participation in our democracy. I am proud of the ways that election officials in my State have stepped up in recent years to make voting safer, to make it more secure and at the same time more accessible for every New Mexican, and our State has seen greater participation in our elections as a result. Now, unfortunately, we are seeing the polar opposite of this approach in our neighboring States.

Just last week, Democratic lawmakers from Texas came to Washington, DC, to warn us just how dire the situation has become in their State. Texas's Governor, Greg Abbott, and Republican lawmakers in Austin are hell-bent on passing sweeping voting restrictions as part of a nakedly

discriminatory power grab. These proposed changes would reduce voting hours, push back the start of Sunday early voting when many Black voters cast their ballots, and eliminate polling locations in larger urban counties. The goal of this type of legislation is pretty plain to see.

This shameful and transparent attempt to take away Texans' right to vote and similar attempts to disenfranchise voters in many other States should be a wake-up call to every single American. We should all be able to see that these attacks on voting are taking advantage of and in many cases being driven by our former President's lies and conspiracy theories about the last election.

Make no mistake, former President Trump's Big Lie about his loss in the 2020 election has sown widespread and damaging distrust in our elections. We should never forget that this same distrust and disinformation fomented a mob of violent insurrectionists who stormed into this very building, the very heart of our democracy, less than 6 months ago.

Now, unfortunately, that cat is out of the bag. I don't see this widespread public distrust in our elections going away anytime soon as a result, especially as long as our former President continues to add more fuel to the fire and particularly when Republicans—even Republicans who know that he is lying—continue to follow him down that rabbit hole.

In one of New Mexico's other neighboring States, in Arizona, there is a so-called audit of the votes cast in their largest county. This bogus audit is being conducted by a private company paid for by secret pro-Trump funders, with no effective oversight.

When you outsource nonpartisan election work to a firm calling themselves the Cyber Ninjas, you know things are off the rails. All of the distrust in our elections that has been ginned up by the former President is all the more reason for us to come together to pass commonsense reforms that would restore all Americans' faith in our elections and in our democracy.

The right of every lawful American to vote is just that; it is a right, and no one, no one, should be able to take that away. The public should have confidence that our leaders are working on their behalf, not in fealty to a class of dark money billionaires. They deserve transparency so that they can see who is behind the political ads on their television screens and their social media feeds. Most importantly, they deserve to know that our fundamentally American right to vote is secure, accessible, and easy to navigate for every single lawful American.

That is why it is so important for the Senate to take up the For the People Act this week. This comprehensive legislation addresses all of the critical challenges facing our political systems and our democratic institutions. The For the People Act would restore

transparency, accountability, and strong ethics rules for our elections.

It would stop billionaires from being able to anonymously pour buckets of cash into our elections in an effort to buy them. It would put an end to partisan gerrymandering and broken election rules that allow Republicans and Democrats alike to rig the system for themselves and for special interests. And it would modernize voting systems so that every American, no matter their race, their political party, or their ZIP Code, can have confidence in their ability to exercise their right to vote.

Democrats and Republicans in the Senate should come together to pass commonsense election security, voter protections, and campaign finance reforms in the For the People Act. Each of these provisions, on their own, have won bipartisan support at the State and local level. In a previous, less partisan time, these ideas would have earned broad bipartisan support here in Congress. These are not Democratic or Republican ideas; they are fundamental reforms that we need to pass in order to restore the essential American idea that each of us has a say in who we elect as our leaders.

The House has already passed the For the People Act earlier this year. It is now the Senate's turn to take up this critical legislation. Unless we can pass the reforms that are in the For the People Act, we will keep living under a broken status quo where the special interests wield far too much control and State lawmakers can continue to undermine and ignore constitutional rights.

It is outrageous that Senate Republicans, as we heard from the minority leader, are planning to block legislation to restore voting rights and bring much-needed transparency and ethics into our elections. Their refusal to even allow debate on the For the People Act should be seen for what it is. It is a ringing endorsement of former President Trump's conspiracy theories and his attacks on our elections and on reality itself.

Refusing to take up the For the People Act will prop up the campaigns that we are seeing in States across the country that strip Americans of our hard-won right to vote.

Mr. President, I want to be clear. If Senate Republicans are successful later today in using the filibuster to block the Senate from even debating the For the People Act, this cannot be the end of the story. We simply cannot give up on passing voting rights legislation in this Congress, not when our democracy is what is on the line.

We should all remember that the filibuster is a rule, a rule that cannot even be found in the Constitution, but voting, voting is an American right. When I think about this, I remember my former colleague across the hall from me, actually, when I served in the House, Representative John Lewis. It was one of the most humbling experi-

ences of my life to be able to serve in the same Chamber as Congressman Lewis.

John Lewis dedicated his entire life to the fight for the right of all Americans to cast their ballot safely and without fear of discrimination. More than 50 years ago, he and so many others marched and put their lives on the line to call on President Lyndon Johnson and Members of Congress from both parties to pass the Voting Rights Act. Back then and every time the Voting Rights Act has been reauthorized since, Senators from both parties have found a way to protect our democracy and preserve the right to vote.

Right now, America is facing down daunting threats to our democratic values here at home. For the first time since the Civil War, the greatest threats to the Republic are from within. History will judge all of us based on what we do to defend that fundamental right for all—not some but all—of our fellow Americans.

Mr. President, will we meet this moment? If we fail to rise to the discrimination baked into these State laws, our failure will cast a long shadow. I will be proud to cast my vote on the side of democracy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, later today, the Senate will vote on S. 2093. S. 2093 is the new S. 1. It is the latest version of the so-called For the People Act, which is a massive, massive Federal takeover of election law.

So why are we taking up a massive Federal takeover of election law? Well, that is a good question. Two years ago, Democrats told us that we needed to pass this law because our electoral system was broken. Well, then came 2020. We had a record voter turnout, the largest voter turnout since the election of 1900, the largest turnout in 120 years in American history. And Democrats won the White House.

After that, it got a little awkward to complain that our electoral system was broken. So Democrats found a new argument. Now, we have to pass this legislation to stop States from taking away voting rights. According to Democrats, States' moves to update or clarify their election laws in the wake of pandemic challenges and vote-counting confusion are really plots to restrict voter access.

Of course, so far, most 2021 State election law updates have proved to be both standard and mainstream, but that hasn't stopped Democrats who have, at times, resorted to outright lies in their efforts to persuade Americans

that we are facing a voting rights crisis.

After all, Democrats need to give some reason for why we should allow the Federal Government to take over our entire electoral system. And Democrats' real reason—because they think S. 1 will give them an advantage in future elections—is not really one that they can use to sell the bill, although Speaker PELOSI did admit on national television that she thought S. 1 would boost Democrats' electoral chances.

The question is where to start when it comes to the bill's content. As I said, like the original S. 1, the new S. 1 is an unprecedented Federal takeover of elections. Historically, running elections has largely been a matter for States, which tailor election laws to the particular needs of their cities and communities.

S. 1 would impose one-size-fits-all, Federal regulations on elections—in many cases, deeply problematic regulations. S. 1 would require States to allow unlimited ballot harvesting, which is the controversial practice of allowing political operatives and others to pick up and deliver ballots, with all of the possibilities for fraud that that creates.

It would gut State voter ID laws—laws which, I would point out, are supported by a strong majority of the American people. A recent poll said 80 percent of Americans support voter ID laws. It would remove legal penalties for registering individuals who are here illegally—and so much more.

But the new S. 1, like the old S. 1, goes way beyond undermining the security of our elections and increasing the likelihood of voter fraud. It would implement public funding of political campaigns, which would mean that government dollars, money that belongs to the American taxpayer, would go to funding yard signs and attack ads. Sitting Senators alone could qualify for more than \$1.8 billion in public funding. And that doesn't count their challengers.

Yes, with a record high debt, Democrats apparently think that dropping a couple billion dollars here and there on attack ads and partisan rallies is a good use of taxpayer dollars.

And from there, believe it or not, the ideas only get worse. S. 1 would permanently undermine confidence in our electoral system by turning the Federal Election Commission, the primary enforcer of election law in this country, into a partisan body. That is right. The Democrats' bill would turn the primary enforcer of election law in this country into a partisan body. Now, I am interested to hear how this is supposed to enhance voter confidence in our electoral system. Every single FEC ruling would be suspect.

And on top of all this, S. 1 makes a concerted attack on freedom of speech. It would impose onerous requirements and restrictions on political speech. It would open up private Americans to retaliation and intimidation simply for

making a donation to support a cause they believe in. And it would allow the IRS to consider organizations' beliefs when deciding whether or not to grant them tax-exempt status.

In fact, the ACLU—the American Civil Liberties Union—actually opposed the House's version of S. 1 in the last Congress because the bill would “unconstitutionally burden speech and associational rights.” That is right. The American Civil Liberties Union opposed the legislation because the bill would “unconstitutionally burden speech and associational rights.”

As hard as it is to believe when you look at the bill's provisions, S. 1 was billed as an election integrity bill. In fact, this legislation would undermine election integrity, making our elections less secure and more susceptible to fraud. And it would undermine voter confidence in our elections.

The partisan divide in this country has reached new heights, and voters on both sides have lost confidence in our electoral process. Any election legislation that we take up should be focused on building voter confidence in the fairness of our electoral system, not undermining it.

Do my Democratic colleagues seriously believe—seriously believe—that S. 1 would do anything to increase voter confidence in the unbiased character of our electoral system? Do they seriously believe that their bill looks like a nonpartisan attempt to protect American elections? They can't possibly.

From the newly partisan FEC to an IRS empowered to reject tax-exempt status for organizations whose beliefs it doesn't like, S. 1 is very clearly a bill designed purely and simply to enhance political power—the political power, Democrats hope, of the Democratic Party. It is the very opposite of a nonpartisan reform bill.

And I have to ask my Democratic colleagues, do you really want an electoral system that is perceived as partisan and which half the country doesn't trust? Haven't we seen the consequences of that? Are you really prepared to sacrifice voter confidence in our electoral system just so you can win elections?

Later this afternoon, we will vote on S. 1. And I fully expect that this legislation will be blocked, and it should be. The Senate's rules, which require the agreement of 60 Senators to move forward to consider legislation, were designed—designed—for times just like these, times when a narrow partisan majority attempts to shove through partisan legislation, times when a partisan majority attacks the freedoms that our government exists to protect.

The Senate was established to act as a monitoring body and check attempts to ride roughshod over minority rights or to curtail our rights and our liberties. And today the Senate will fulfill that role and prevent this dangerous, partisan takeover of our electoral system from moving forward.

To elaborate on that point for just a moment, when I asked the question earlier on about why would you bring this bill to the floor—it is a good question, I think, knowing full well that it is going to fail, and should fail later today, but why would you bring it to the floor? Well, allegedly, the reason to bring it to the floor was to provide pressures on certain Democratic Members that this is the reason that they need to vote to do away with the legislative filibuster, which is something that has been part of the Senate going back to our Founding Fathers. In fact, the very reason the Founding Fathers created the U.S. Senate was a check and balance against majoritarian rule and running roughshod over the rights of the minority here in the U.S. Senate. And the legislative filibuster has ensured and provided that protection, so much so that it was used extensively in the last 6 years, when Republicans were in control of the Senate, by the Democrats to filibuster legislation. In fact, it was used to filibuster coronavirus relief bills. It was used to filibuster police reform bills. It was used over and over to block the former President's nominees. And yet, now, we are being told that the Senate needs to get rid of the legislative filibuster and that all those Democrats, all those on the other side of the aisle who used it extensively to block Republican legislation over the past 6 years, now believe that we need to get rid of this legislative filibuster and that this bill is example No. 1 for why that is necessary.

Well, it is really ironic and interesting to hear Members on the other side make that argument, given where they were a couple of years ago. It was just a couple of years ago—maybe 3 years ago—that 33 Democratic Senators signed a letter—a letter—to the Republican leader at the time, Senator MCCONNELL, saying that we need to preserve the filibuster, the legislative filibuster, in the Senate because it is so crucial to the essence of the Senate and the protections that it provides for the rights of the minority here in the U.S. Senate. Thirty-three Democrats, many of whom are still serving in this body, adopted that position.

And, in fact, the Democratic whip, my counterpart on the Democratic side, said, a couple of years ago on a morning show:

I can tell you that would be the end of the Senate as it was originally devised and created going back to our Founding Fathers. We have to acknowledge our respect for the minority, and that is what the Senate tries to do in its composition and in its procedure.

“I can tell you,” he said, the Democratic whip, the Senator from Illinois, “that it would be the end of the Senate as it was originally devised and created going back to our Founding Fathers.” In other words, we need to preserve the filibuster to preserve our democracy. It is essential. That was the view as recently as a couple of years ago. And now, now, we have to get rid of the filibuster to preserve our democracy 2

years later. The filibuster, the legislative filibuster, which in various forms has served our Republic now for over two centuries. It has been a part of the U.S. Senate checks and balances that the Founders envisioned for this country.

And yet here we are bringing a bill to the floor for no other purpose than to have a show vote to try and pressure certain Democratic Senators who, rightfully, are defending the legislative filibuster as an essential element of protecting the rights of the minority in the Senate, of requiring cooperation and collaboration and bringing people together on legislation. Solutions in the Senate, historically—and I was a staffer here back in the 1980s. That is how long my tenure, at least as a staffer and now subsequently as a Member, goes back. But the Senate is a place where solutions tend to be found in the middle because that is required. It is required that there be 60 votes to move consequential legislation. And as a result of that, Members on both sides have to come together. If you want to pass big things in the Senate, you have to figure out a way to get 60 votes. And right now that would require—in the Senate, if you had every Democrat, 50 Democrats, you would have to get 10 Republicans. As was the case when we had the majority in the Senate, we had to get seven Democrats to do anything. And so, in order to even move essential legislation like the coronavirus bill, we had to reach out to the other side. And it forced that compromise, that collaboration, that willingness to come together and work in a bipartisan way on solutions that are durable, that are durable for this country.

It is really interesting in this Washington Post op-ed by Senator SINEMA, where she points out—makes that very point that if you can do something at 51 votes today, and one side blows up the rules in the Senate, that when the majority changes—and it always does in the Senate, and she points out that sometimes when you get in the majority, you think you will be there forever. Well, I have been here long enough to have been in the majority and the minority and in the majority and the minority again. It goes back and forth.

So what are you going to do then the next time the Senate majority flips and all those things that the other side thinks are awful, awful ideas that the Republicans have, and they would love to be able to block them or at least force Republicans to come to the table and negotiate a solution that would require some bipartisan participation to get to 60 votes—what are you going to do then, where we have 51 votes when one side gets the majority and 50 votes and we go back and forth and we have this policy, this kind of policy roller coaster that provides no certainty, no predictability, and certainly gets away from the checks and balances that the Founders intended?

The filibuster—the legislative filibuster, the rules of the Senate, the pro-

cedures of the Senate, are designed to protect and preserve democracy not to undermine it. What undermines it are cynical attempts to try and use a piece of legislation that the leadership on the other side knows is going nowhere and bring it to the floor for a show vote to put pressure—to put pressure—on Senate Democrats, who, as I said, rightfully, are defending that very procedure, which has worked so well to their advantage for the past 6 years.

And now we are told the reason they have to change it is because Republicans are being so—we are not cooperating. We are not—you know, we are sticks in the mud. We are stopping and blocking things.

We haven't even been in the minority now for 6 months. We spent the last 6 years in the majority, as the other side extensively—and I emphasize “extensively” because any study of the data would suggest that—to block Republican initiatives, to force Republicans to come together to find 60 votes. That was their position and posture for the past 6 years, including 33 Democratic Senators who, as recently as 3 years ago, sent a letter to the Republican leader, saying that we have got to protect the legislative filibuster—statements like the one made by the Senator from Illinois that doing away with the filibuster would end the Senate as it was originally devised and created, going back to our Founding Fathers.

One of the essential elements of this Republic constitutionally was the need for checks and balances. And the bicameral creation of the Founding Fathers, the House, which is based upon the majority, 2-year terms, designed to reflect the will of the of people, the balance and check that was created against that was the U.S. Senate, with 6-year terms, where you have procedures and rules that make it more difficult and challenging, that force this place to be more deliberative, to be more compromising, to consult and work together.

And so what we are doing today, you are going to get up, and my colleagues on the other side are going to talk about how critical it is that we do this because all these States are enacting these terrible, terrible election reforms. And as I said earlier, most of which, at least from what I have seen, are very mainstream and consistent with what the Founders designed in our Constitution, and that is for States to have principal primacy when it comes to controlling and regulating elections in this country. But as I said, it was argued 2 years ago, 3 years ago, in 2019, when this bill was introduced, that it needed to be introduced because we have got to do something to increase participation in our elections; that we really need to encourage people to be more active in our elections; that we have got to get people to vote, which they did, in record numbers—the biggest turnout since 1900, biggest voter participation in the 2020 election literally in 120 years in American history.

So now they introduced a bill this year, and the stated reason is, we have to do this to stop all these States that are adopting these legislative solutions that are going to make it more difficult for people to vote. Well, all I can say is, the rationale for what we are doing today changes depending on the year, depending on the election, but the goal is the same, and that is to create a permanent political advantage for one party—that is all this is about—and to persuade and pressure certain Democratic Senators to do away with one of the fundamental elements of the U.S. Senate in the form of a legislative filibuster.

I hope this vote will make at least some Democrats think twice about the wisdom of permanently politicizing our electoral system and that it will encourage them to make sure that any future election reform proposals are genuinely bipartisan in nature.

Unfortunately, I think it is more likely that Democrats are going to use this vote to argue for destroying the Senate's longstanding protections for minority rights. But today—today, at least, the Senate will fulfill its constitutional mandate and act as a check on this attempt to undermine our basic freedoms.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA).

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I rise today at a defining moment in American history and at a time when I sincerely believe that what we do or fail to do will have long-lasting and far-reaching implications for the health, viability, and vitality of the world's greatest democracy.

We debate many important issues in this Chamber, but this issue, the issue of voting rights, I argue, is decidedly different. It is formative and foundational. It is the framework in which all of our other debates take place, for this issue is about the preservation and the protection of the democracy itself. That is, after all, what we claim to be. That is who we are—a democracy built on that sacred idea of one person, one vote.

With all the arguments taking place in the country right now, with all of the audits being ordered, and with all of the voting legislation being feverishly passed in States all across our country, clearly, ironically, there is agreement—albeit for different reasons on the right and on the left—that democracy itself is in danger. Folks on the left and folks on the right believe that there is something broken and it needs to be fixed.

If that is, indeed, the case, what kind of Congress would we be in the whole history of Congresses if, seeing that discussion out there, we refuse to even debate the matter in here? Who are we and how are we to hide in a moment like this?

So I rise with what I think is a simple request of my colleagues. Let's do our job. Resist the easy route, the temptation to hide behind Senate procedure, and let's have a principled conversation in front of the American people about voting rights. Let's have that conversation right here, right now. How could we do otherwise?

It is said that we are the most important deliberative body on the planet. Well, colleagues, how derelict in our duty would we be if, in this defining moment we refuse to even have a debate—a debate—about how best to preserve and protect that which is most precious: the democracy itself.

In my maiden speech this past March, I made an urgent call upon this body to act to protect the right to vote, and I warned then that the cords of our democracy were dangerously frayed. That was not theoretical stuff from me. I hail from Georgia. I argued then that our democracy was being frayed by unfounded conspiracy theories that led to an attack on this very Chamber and undermined by an onslaught of State-level proposals aimed at suppressing the vote.

Since I gave that maiden speech, things have only gotten worse. When I spoke here in March, 250 voter suppression proposals had been introduced in 43 States—250 proposals. Now it is 389 proposals in 48 States. A violent assault on this Capitol is now metastasizing to voter suppression proposals all across the United States of America. Since I spoke here in March, Georgia and 13 other States have enacted these voter suppression bills into law—14 in total. That is 14 States, and counting, where partisan actors, power-hungry politicians have acted along partisan lines to make it harder, not easier, for eligible voters to cast a ballot and guarantee that ballot will actually count.

In Georgia, after record voter turnout in a historic election, there is now a provision in S.B. 202 that allows partisan actors at the State level to take over the board—to take it over—to take over the process at the local level as voters are casting their ballots. Imagine that. That same law also allows any citizen to challenge the voting rights of an unlimited number of citizens, making it difficult to see how you can certify any election.

Let's not kid ourselves. In this Chamber, of all places, a few months after January 6, this is dangerous stuff. That is one reason we need to debate the legislation before us.

I am hoping to include a provision I introduced yesterday with some of my colleagues that will prevent politicians from being able to overrule local election officials and therefore subvert the

voices of the people. This provision will also protect local election volunteers from harassment and intimidation.

Right now across the Nation, constitutional rights are being assaulted, and I fear that if we don't act as a body in this moment, we will have crossed a dangerous Rubicon in our Nation that will make it extremely difficult for the next generation to secure voting rights for every eligible American.

This is not just another moment in another Congress. We should not think of this as rote and routine. This is a defining moment that calls upon us to speak, to debate, to act. After all, Congress represents the people. It is the job of Congress, as prescribed in article I, section 4, to ensure that the people are not squeezed out and locked out of their own democracy. This is not our house; this is the house of the people. We are stewards of that trust. We have to ensure that the voices of the people can be heard in their own house, and that is why I am urging my colleagues to begin debating on the voting rights legislation before us. That debate is happening right now out there. How could it not happen in here?

I know some of my Republican friends are vowing to prevent this debate, to stop it before it begins. And we are not talking yet about passing the bill. Be very clear. We are just talking about talking about it, and they don't even want to do that. Really?

Surely some of my Republican friends believe at the very least that in this Chamber, we should be able to debate about voting rights. After all, voting rights are preservative of all other rights. And what could be more hypocritical and cynical than invoking minority rights in the Senate as a pretext for preventing debate about how to preserve minority rights in the society?

I stand here as a proud American. I believe in democracy with all of my heart. I believe that democracy is the political enactment of a spiritual idea, that we are all children of God, and that we have within us a spark of the divine and therefore a right to help determine our country's direction and our destiny within it.

I believe in democracy, government of the people, by the people, and for the people. I believe that the blind spots in our public policy and the wrongs in our history are made right through the power of democracy, people of diverse perspectives helping us to see more fully and embrace more completely what it means to be a government of the people, by the people, for the people. It is how Black people finally gained their citizenship; women, the suffrage; members of the LGBTQ+ community, their dignity and equality under law.

Diverse perspectives and voices help us to see what we would not otherwise see, and that is precisely what is being imperiled right now by all of these voter suppression bills and by some in this Chamber to forestall a necessary debate about voting rights at this defining moment in our history.

Mr. President, who are we and how are we to hide at a moment like this? Why are some people hiding? To what end? For what purpose? At whose behest? From whom are they hiding—the American people who sent us here in the first place?

I hope we can take a bipartisan vote to begin debate on this important piece of legislation because that is what democracy is all about. History is watching, and the future is waiting to see if we are who we say we are—the United States Senate, a serious-minded, deliberative body, the United States of America, a nation built on that simple but sublime principle: one person, one vote.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I had not planned to speak about the Democratic power grab known as S. 1 and H.R. 1, the For the People Act. I have said my piece on this bill before on the Senate floor and in many other forums. But I have listened to my Democratic friends all day long talk about this bill.

We will later today vote on what is known as a motion to proceed to the debate on this bill. That motion will fail. It won't come close to passing. And our Democratic friends are saying: They won't even debate. They won't even debate election reforms.

Well, first off, let me say, if you ask me what the Republican plan to federalize our elections is, my answer is, we don't have a plan to federalize our elections. We don't think we should federalize our elections. We think the States and their counties have done a pretty good job, traditionally, of running our elections.

I would also remind my Democratic friends that what they present as some kind of unprecedented affront to having a democratic debate in the Senate happened repeatedly, hundreds of times, in the last administration.

My Democratic friends simply voted not even to have a debate—not even to have a debate on, say, a coronavirus relief package last summer, which could have gotten aid to families and businesses when they needed it. When the pandemic was still raging, when vaccines were still months away, they filibustered even a debate until after the election, when we passed, in December, almost exactly the same bill that was under consideration.

They blocked even a debate—even a debate—on policing reforms last summer that might have helped provide police departments across the country with additional financial support or training resources.

I could go on and on about the bills on which they blocked even a debate, like protecting unborn children who can survive outside their mother's womb. Yet, today, the Democrats act as if it is some terrible affront that we are not even going to have a debate on a bill that would be one of the biggest power grabs by Washington in the history of our democracy.

Then you have a lot of Democrats who are complaining that the civic rules and customs—the filibuster has to go. They say it is a racist relic of the Jim Crow era.

I will acknowledge that some Democrats over the years used the filibuster to block civil rights progress, but I will also remind my Democratic colleagues that, yes, they used the filibuster hundreds of times in the last administration.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD this letter written on April 7, 2017, persuasively authored by SUSAN COLLINS and CHRIS COONS and signed by more than 60 of our fellow Senators urging Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER to “preserve the existing rules, practices and traditions as they pertain to the right of Members to engage in extended debate on legislation.”

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, April 7, 2017.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Hon. CHARLES E. SCHUMER,
Democratic Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL AND DEMOCRATIC LEADER SCHUMER: We are writing to urge you to support our efforts to preserve existing rules, practices, and traditions as they pertain to the right of Members to engage in extended debate on legislation before the United States Senate. Senators have expressed a variety of opinions about the appropriateness of limiting debate when we are considering judicial and executive branch nominations. Regardless of our past disagreements on that issue, we are united in our determination to preserve the ability of Members to engage in extended debate when bills are on the Senate floor.

We are mindful of the unique role the Senate plays in the legislative process, and we are steadfastly committed to ensuring that this great American institution continues to serve as the world's greatest deliberative body. Therefore, we are asking you to join us in opposing any effort to curtail the existing rights and prerogatives of Senators to engage in full, robust, and extended debate as we consider legislation before this body in the future.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Collins, Orrin Hatch, Claire McCaskill, Lisa Murkowski, Christopher A. Coons, Joe Manchin, John McCain, Patrick Leahy, Roger F. Wicker, Luther Strange.

Angus S. King, Jr., Michael F. Bennett, Amy Klobuchar, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Martin Heinrich, John Boozman, Lindsey Graham, Richard Burr, Mark R. Warner, Jerry Moran, Roy Blunt, Marco Rubio, Jeanne Shaheen, Thom Tillis, Sherrod Brown, Shelley Moore Capito, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Brian Schatz, Michael E. Enzi, Dean Heller.

Cory A. Booker, Mazie Hirono, Dianne Feinstein, John Thune, Bill Cassidy, Heidi Heitkamp, Jeff Flake, Chuck Grassley, Maria Cantwell, Rob Portman.

Lamar Alexander, John Kennedy, John Tester, Thomas R. Carper, Pat Roberts, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tammy Duckworth, Jack Reed, Thad Cochran, Joe Donnelly.

Ben Sasse, Todd Young, Kamala D. Harris, Bill Nelson, Johnny Isakson, Edward J. Markey, Mike Lee, Debbie Stabenow, Sheldon Whitehouse, Robert Menendez, Tim Kaine.

Mr. COTTON. They note that these rules have changed on our Executive Calendar when we consider traditional nominees or executive branch nominees, but they say:

We are mindful of the unique role the Senate plays in the legislative process, and we are steadfastly committed to ensuring that this great [American] institution continues to serve as the world's greatest deliberative body. Therefore, we are asking you [Senator SCHUMER and Senator MCCONNELL] to join us in opposing any effort to curtail the existing rights and prerogatives of Senators to engage in full, robust, and extended debate as we consider legislation before this body in the future.

Let me remind you, more than 60 Senators signed this. Twenty-six Democrats currently serving in the Senate signed it, 27 if you include the Vice President.

Let me just give you a few notables. As I said, the Vice President signed it. The following chairs of Senate committees signed this letter 4 short years ago: Senators LEAHY, WARNER, CANTWELL, CARPER, REED, STABENOW, and MENENDEZ. Some other notable Senators—as I said, it was authored by Senator COONS, one of Joe Biden's closest friends in the U.S. Senate. Senator KING, who often finds himself in the middle of consequential debates; Senator HEINRICH, who apparently has changed his tune and today is advocating aggressively to eliminate the filibuster, just like Senator SCHATZ; Senator BOOKER; Senator FEINSTEIN, one of the longest serving Democrats in the Senate; Senator Kaine, who was the Vice Presidential nominee for the Democratic Party in 2016; Senator TESTER, again, who often finds himself in the middle of consequential, bipartisan negotiations.

Yet, somehow, something has changed since 2017. Something has changed, and most of these Democratic Senators now think that the Senate rules must be destroyed so they can pass their massive power grab. What could it be that has changed? What could it be? I don't know. Maybe—maybe it is that Democrats have the most slender reed of power with Joe Biden in the White House and a 50–50 Senate and a four-seat majority in the House.

I wish my Democratic colleagues understood that the shoe can pinch when it is on the other foot.

NOMINATION OF CHRISTOPHER CHARLES FONZONE

Mr. President, Huawei is no ordinary phone company; it is the eyes and ears of the Chinese Communist Party. According to our Department of Defense, Huawei is a “Communist Chinese military company” that is controlled by the People's Liberation Army. A former officer in the PLA founded Huawei.

Huawei is built on stolen technology from American companies like Cisco, and it is engaged in espionage all around the world on behalf of its masters in Beijing, which raises some important questions.

Should American citizens work on behalf of a Communist Chinese military company? If they do, should they then go on to serve in senior positions in the U.S. Government, making policies that will directly affect our safety and security? These aren't academic questions. The Senate is now considering whether to confirm one Christopher Fonzone for a senior legal position in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

By all accounts, Mr. Fonzone is a capable lawyer. I don't question his qualifications or his character, but there is reason to question his judgment.

While working as a law partner at Sidley Austin, Mr. Fonzone performed legal work for Huawei, as well as China's Ministry of Commerce. He performed this work during a critical period when our government was actively exposing Huawei as a Chinese spy company and applying sanctions to it.

He also wasn't just a longtime lawyer in private practice with long-standing clients, to include foreign clients; he had spent most of his career in government, primarily in national security roles. I cannot imagine that he was not aware of the China threat in general or the Huawei threat in particular. After all, the House Intelligence Committee had produced a landmark report exposing Huawei in 2012, while he served in the Obama administration.

Now, I recognize he didn't do all that much work for Huawei—just a few billable hours here and there—but the fact remains that he first served Huawei, and now he wants to serve in the U.S. Government. Nor is he willing to foreclose the possibility of working for such companies in the future.

Unfortunately, Mr. Fonzone is far from alone in his lapse of judgment. There is a rapidly revolving door in Washington, DC, that shuttles people in and out of government. Unfortunately, some of those people go on to work for companies with ties to the Chinese Government and its armed wing, the People's Liberation Army, after they cycle out of government. These individuals are part of what I call the new China lobby. They work at white-shoe law firms, sprawling multinational corporations, and big banks. Their pockets are lined with Chinese Communist cash, just like Hollywood executives and NBA stars and ivory tower academics. Some of them get very rich by doing Beijing's bidding, and they don't want the gravy train to stop.

Consider a recent article in the Financial Times, which reported that some of the richest banks and investment firms in America had been forming partnerships with Chinese state-run banks. Similarly, some of America's biggest companies, like Nike and Coca-Cola, are so addicted to access to the Chinese market that they lobbied last year against a bill to crack down on goods made by slave labor—all because that bill would make it more difficult for Coke and Nike to make their